School Improvement Technical Assistance Partner Profile
Indiana Department of Eduction, Improvement Summit
April 23-24, 2019

Background

- FourPoint Education Partners, 8610 Ridge Rd., Bethesda, MD 20817
- Dr. Scott Joftus, President, scott@fourpointeducation.com, 301-229-3049
- FourPoint's mission is to work collaboratively with education and community leaders to achieve outstanding results for all students.

Approach

FourPoint Education Partners first developed **The Learning Network**, an effective and adaptable approach to school transformation, over a decade ago. The Learning Network model, which has been implemented across the State of Kansas and Washington, DC, supports schools in developing and implementing *aligned and integrated approaches to transformation* that work together to improve student learning.

FourPoint plays the role of transformation partner and manager of **four primary activities**: district and school needs assessments, technical support and performance management, coaching for school and district leaders, and collaboration among participants.

The Learning Network

The Learning Network was designed to *easily adapt to the unique needs of individual schools and districts*. Every participating school/district receives a **needs assessment**, which identifies a problem of practice (a root cause of poor performance). A FourPoint coach works with each school/district to develop an **action plan** aligned to the problem of practice. We work together to performance manage the improvement process based on clear **impact and implementation indicators**. Schools addressing similar problems of practice are grouped together in a **Community of Practice**. As a result, each school or district receives the support it needs to address its specific challenges and barriers to improved outcomes for students.

The attributes of an **ideal partner** are embedded in an MOU that FourPoint asks our Learning Network partners to sign. The MOU outlines *clear roles and responsibilities*, including openly sharing data and information with FourPoint and other schools/districts in the network, adopting an improvement—rather than compliance—mindset, following through on commitments outlined in action plans, coming to network meetings prepared, and providing honest and constructive feedback to colleagues. We also take time at the beginning of each engagement to jointly develop a set of norms that lays the foundation for effective collaboration.
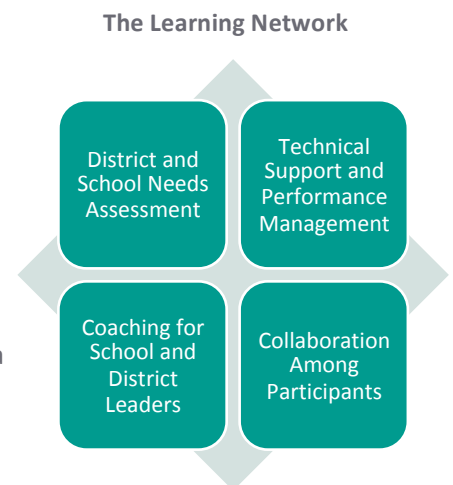
Impact

FourPoint has a 15-year track record in successfully helping schools, districts, and states to improve outcomes for students. Over this time, FourPoint implemented The Learning Network (TLN) across Kansas for five years (2008-13) and across DC (DCPS and charter schools) for three years (2014-17). **Ten evaluations across both states found that TLN had a positive impact on student achievement.**

In 2017, Sharon Gaskins—the deputy assistant superintendent for DC's Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE)—summarized her department's analysis of TLN's impact on student achievement in DC: "Of the 16 participating priority schools with which FourPoint worked during the 2016-17 school year, 11 showed gains in math with nine of them outpacing average gains for all schools in the District. In ELA, 13 out of 16 schools showed gains in ELA from the previous school year, all outpacing average gains for all schools in DC."

Ms. Gaskins added that "almost all participating principals cited in interviews that TLN is a great benefit to them and a significant contributor to their schools' improvement." This correlational link between TLN and student outcomes in Washington, DC, was supported by the three evaluations conducted by graduate students from George Washington University.

> "FourPoint has been a wonderful partner. Their team is made up of experienced, thoughtful educators who have served in almost every capacity in public education. This experience, I believe, gives them the understanding that there is no silver bullet in education but rather that improvement takes focus, effective coaching, content expertise, capacity building, and outstanding performance management. The FourPoint team helps us and the schools track progress in a way that improves implementation and leads to results."
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> **--Sharon Gaskins, Deputy Assistant Superintendent, OSSE**

> "I attribute much of FourPoint's success to their professionalism, their collaborative approach, and their ability to contextualize the services. The team has a tremendous amount of expertise, but they approach the work in a humble way, working collaboratively and respectfully with education leaders while still pushing for excellence. I truly valued the partnership that I had with them during my tenure in Kansas, and strongly recommend them to any school system."
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> **--Dr. Diane DeBacker, former Commissioner of Education for the State of Kansas**

Similarly, GW graduate students' evaluations of TLN in the State of Kansas found that TLN contributed to improved student outcomes. Lykken (2012) found that TLN "contribut(ed) to the rise in student achievement in Kansas school districts participating in TLN cohorts. Across all four cohorts, students in TLN-associated districts consistently score(d) higher on state reading and math assessments than students in non-TLN associated districts." Specifically, Lykken (2012) found that 64% of TLN districts achieved a higher percentage change than non-TLN districts in reading and 57% were higher in math. Finally, Lykken (2012) found that the longer districts participated in TLN, the more likely they were to outperform non-TLN districts: Eighty percent of "cohort one" districts outperformed non-TLN districts.

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